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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 002007

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Biographic sketches of new members of LTTE negotiating team slated to attend upcoming talks

Ref: Colombo 1682

(U) Classified by W. Lewis Amselem, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

1. (C) Para three contains brief biographic sketches of two new members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) negotiating team. (Note: The second round of peace talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government is scheduled to take place in Thailand from October 31 - November 3.) The two new members of the LTTE team are: S.P. Thamilchelvam, the chief of the LTTE's political wing; and Colonel V. Karuna, an important LTTE military commander. (Note: See Reftel for bio-data on the other members of the LTTE team: Anton Balasingham, the head of delegation and LTTE spokesman; Adele Balasingham, the secretary for the team and spouse of Anton Balasingham; J. Maheswaran, a development expert; and V. Rudrakumar, a LTTE legal adviser based in the U.S.)

2. (C) Para four also contains bio-data on V. Balakumaran, who was recently selected by the LTTE to serve as its principal representative on the GSL-LTTE Joint Task Force on humanitarian issues.

3. (C) Brief biographic sketches of the two new LTTE delegation members follow:

-- S.P. Thamilchelvam, age approximately 38, is head of the LTTE's political wing. Thamilchelvam is the LTTE official most often in the press explaining the group's positions (aside from the LTTE's official spokesman, Anton Balasingham). Since the advent of the peace process, he has often been on local and international TV, and has been a key interlocutor with the Norwegian government peace facilitation team. In interviews, he is soft-spoken, often flashing his trademark (and somewhat unnerving) toothy grin. In his current position, Thamilchelvam is said to work very closely with LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran.

Before joining the political wing, Thamilchelvam served in the LTTE's military wing in Jaffna, reportedly fighting in many battles against Sri Lankan security forces, as well against the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF). In fighting against GSL forces near the Jaffna town of Chavakachcheri in 1994, he suffered a serious leg injury, and he still walks with a limp and the assistance of a cane. Thamilchelvam is said to have been close to Mahattaya, a top LTTE official who was killed in the early 1990s after coming into conflict with Prabhakaran.

Thamilchelvam is from Mavattapuram near Jaffna town. He attended high school at Union College in Tellippalai, Jaffna. As is the case with many LTTE leaders, including Prabhakaran, he is from a lower caste within the Hindu community. (Note: The name of the caste is "Ambattar," which was traditionally for barbers.) He speaks Tamil, and some English and Sinhalese.

-- Colonel V. Karuna, approximately 35, is an important LTTE military commander, now serving the group as its military chief in Ampara and Batticaloa Districts in the Eastern province. In addition to Paduman, the military chief in Trincomalee, Karuna is the most senior LTTE official in the east and apparently the most senior eastern Tamil in the group's hierarchy. Although he has not been involved in the Norwegian facilitation talks before, he has dealt extensively with the Norwegian-run Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). Observers say Karuna has been included on the LTTE's negotiating team to ensure that the eastern Tamil perspective is heard. Unlike his recently sidelined colleague, Karikalan (one name only), the former political chief in the Batticaloa/Ampara sector, Karuna is not said to be viscerally anti-Muslim. In the early 1980s, Karuna reportedly received military training in India sponsored by RAW, the Indian intelligence organization. He is from the town of Kiran in Batticaloa District. He

attended high school at Batticaloa Central College. Aside from Tamil, he reportedly speaks adequate English and broken Sinhalese.

14. (C) Bio-data on V. Balakumaran, the LTTE's choice as its head representative on the JTF, follows:

-- Velupillai Balakumaran (alias "Banku Bala"), age roughly 45, is said to be a close associate of Prabhakaran on political issues. He has been working on humanitarian-related issues for the LTTE off-and-on for the past decade, which is apparently why he was chosen for the JTF position. A longtime militant, he helped form a group called EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organization) in 1975. The group was Marxist-Leninist in ideology. In 1990, when EROS split into two, one group led by Balakumaran joined the LTTE. Balakumaran reportedly received training in India and also reportedly trained with Prabhakaran himself in the mid-1970s at a Tamil militant camp near Vavuniya town in north-central Sri Lanka. He is reportedly relatively well-educated and well-traveled for a LTTE official. He is from Jaffna.

15. (U) Minimize considered.

WILLS